

Norwegian Emigration: The experience

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Emigration from Norway started humbly in 1825 when a small group of 52 Norwegian Quakers led by Cleng Persson, left Stavanger on the sloop “Restaurationen”. They were a group of religious persons wanting to live in a land where they could worship their God the way they deemed right. Since then about 8-900 000 persons have left Norway to start a new life in America.

Their reasons for leaving were as varied as the people themselves.

Many families left together, while some husbands left alone to prepare for his family to come later. Many single men and women emigrated alone, some had family members in America already, some not. There were incidents where single pregnant women were “paid” to leave their homes (and country) out of shame.

A few very poor, destitute and mentally handicapped persons were encouraged to leave by their parish leaders and community, and were helped to pay their tickets (they had been a financial burden on their community).

The most common reasons for emigrating from Norway, however, were the reasons found in the “push” and “pull”:

The “push”: population increase, economy, trouble at home, and religion

The “pull”: letters home, advertisements, wanderlust, dreams of land and betterment

Letter home:

“America is the place where tea and coffee and milk are sufficient to flood the colonists; where wheat and pork are daily bread! There every man is cradled in the lap of luck”.

The emigration process:

- Permission from father, grandfather, uncle, older brother
- Permission from the Priest
- Receiving a moving certificate, proof of vaccination and confirmation

Time to prepare:

- All must be sold: Farm, animals, tools and furniture, heirlooms
- Packing: Food (spekeflesk-cured ham), salt, meat, herring, peas, grain, potatoes, butter, flour, flatbread, coffee, sugar, pelts, blankets, bedding, cooking gear, clothing, chests, tools

The trip:

Most people did not live close to the port of departure, and had to travel some distance to get to their port. Persons from “Østlandet” had to travel with horse and buggy, while persons from “Vestlandet” used small boats to get to their ports.

The trip to America:

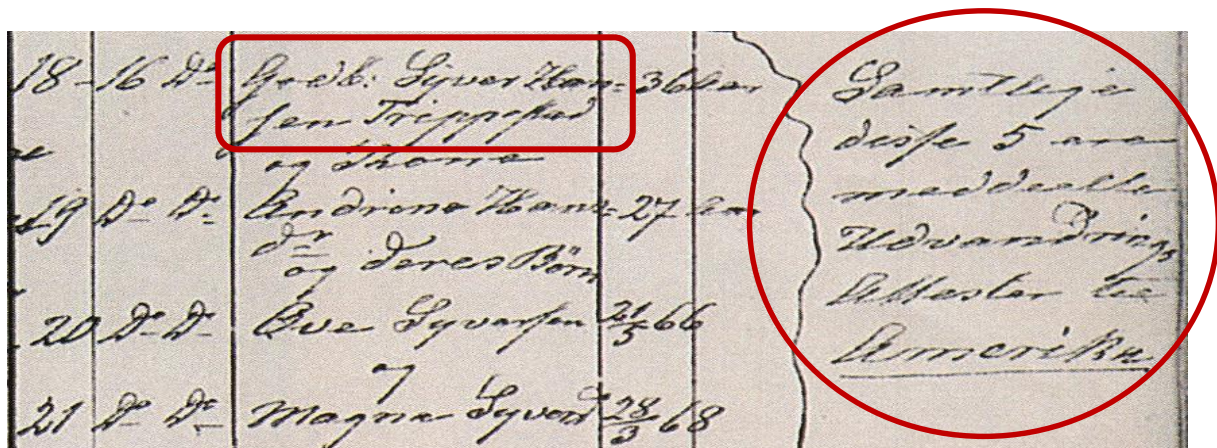
Sailboat: about 2 months

Steamboat: about 2-3 weeks

First stop on the trip was usually Hull, England, where they would go by rail to Liverpool and board another boat to America.

Most Norwegians left from Oslo, while others left from main ports like Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim, Målselv and Bardu

The first record to show persons moving would be the “moving-out records” from the various parishes.



The same family in emigration records:

Syver	Hansen Tripstad	Asckim	35	22.04.1869	St. Paul
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Immigration laws:

From 1824: captains were to ensure there were no dumping of “poor immigrants”

1875: no criminals, prostitutes, or Chinese contract workers were allowed

1882: no insane, crazy, or poor were allowed

1891: no one with contagious diseases, TB, or physical defects were allowed

All had to go through a “physical” when they arrived.

Beginning a new life in America:

- Visit the Land office: put up a claim
- The covered wagon was the home for a while, then small shack or tent, later a dugout or sod house.
- Many built near a spring or creek for water, and near a hill or edge of wood for protection and easy supply of wood (for fire and building).

Sources for emigration:

The emigration records:

- 1867: National database (www.digitalarkivet.no)
- 1825-1925: Norway-Heritage: Hands across the sea (www.norwayheritage.com)

Centralpasskontoret

Emigrantprotokoller

Amerikabrev

Norsk Utvandermuseum (Hamar) <http://www.emigrantmuseum.no/>